AIR WAR COLLEGE

Research Report

THEATER STRATEGIC APPRAISAL

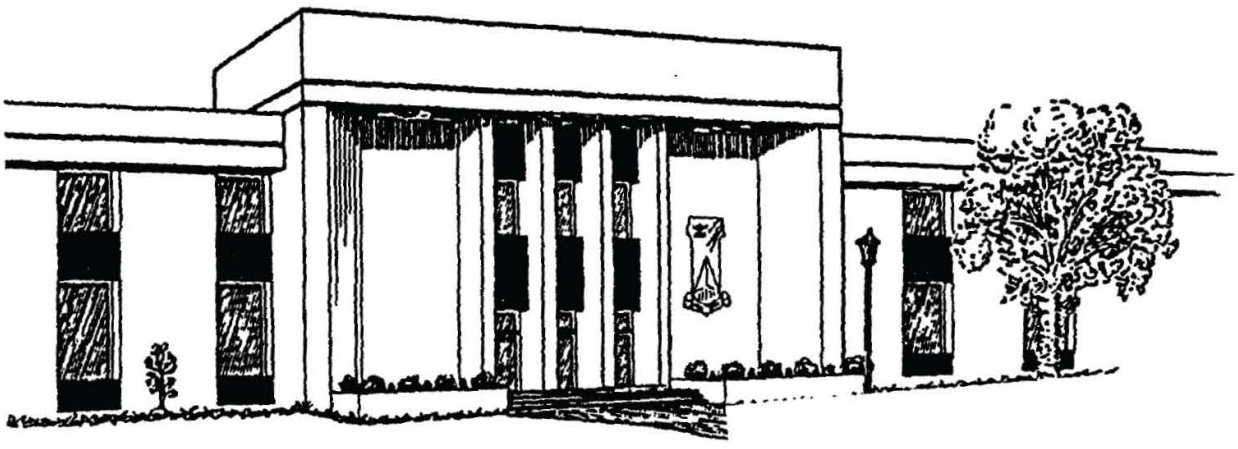
FOR

SOUTH AMERICA

MARK P. GAY

LIEUTENANT COLONEL, USA

1992



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THEATER STRATEGIC ESTIMATE

SOUTH AMERICA

I. Strategic Direction. The radically altered geopolitical situation in South America is acknowledged in the August 1991 edition of the President's National Security Strategy. Not only are US interests linked inextricably with those of our neighbors to the South, but increased understanding that political, social, and economic objectives have overarching security implications suggests a thorough review of regional strategies--in order to construct viable alternatives to the application of military force.

a. Major Components of National Security Strategy

(1.) Global Components. US national interests include the survival of the United States as a free and independent nation; the construct of a healthy and growing economy that provides opportunities at home and abroad; the sustaining and improving of harmonious and productive relations with our allies and emerging friendly nations; and a stable and secure world which stimulates the spread of democratic institutions, fosters political and economic freedom, and which promotes human rights. Each of those interests is manifested in our dynamic relationship

with the countries of South America, as US policies towards the region are adapted in the decade ahead to the realities of President Bush's "Global Reach-Global Power" strategic vision. Although one may argue that radically different strategies are required for countries of the Andean Ridge, as opposed to the Southern Cone Region, I believe it practical to fashion a flexible--but nonetheless multilateral--strategic approach which efficiently allocates finite national resources in the pursuit of broad theater objectives on the Southern continent.

(2.) Regional Components. Specifically, US national security strategy supports the accomplishment of the following objectives in South America:

(a) Deter aggression against our allies and friends in South America IAW terms of the Rio Treaty;

(b) Counter terrorist threats to US citizens and commercial interests in SA short of armed conflict;

(c) Prevent--or at least limit--the transfer of militarily critical technologies by Brazil and Argentina, particularly the spread of missile and/or nuclear technology;

(d) Reduce the growth and export to the United States of illegal drugs, most notably cocaine. Work with SA governments to combat drug traffickers;

(e) Maintain access to South American markets and energy/mineral resources;

(f) Continue to encourage the development of free-market economies in the region;

(g) Achieve cooperative solutions to the environmental challenges of the Amazon Rain Forest, industrial pollution, and exploitation of Antarctica;

(h) Establish a more balanced partnership with South American allies, while providing leadership and ensuring hemispheric stability during the transition period;

(i) Strengthen the Organization of American States in an effort to promote diplomatic solutions to regional disputes. If, in the aftermath of the Malvinas (Falkland Islands) dispute, the OAS is determined politically unsalvageable, then US leaders must work constructively with South American counterparts to create a new organization--perhaps modeled after the Western European Union (WEU)--from which to coordinate political, economic, and regional security matters;

(j) Deter regional military powers, such as Brazil, from seeking regional dominance or initiating internecine warfare (i.e., Argentina/Chile).

(k) Aid in warding off threats to democratic institutions in SA from subversion, insurgencies, or military takeover (or from the urban lawlessness which the US experienced

recently in Los Angeles and other metropolitan areas following the Rodney King trial); and

(l) Promote the continued economic development and social/political progress in South America.

b. Major Components of National Military Strategy

(1) Global Components. With communism's demise, our victories in the Cold War and Southwest Asia, and with the growing recognition that presssing economic and social programs at home mandate drastic reductions in US military defense posture, American military strategy is being revised accordingly. The four pillars of that new strategy are:

(a) Nuclear deterrence and defense against ballistic-missile attack. More will be said about the capabilities of Brazil and Argentina as South America's entrants in the nuclear/ballistic missile race. As the US pursues diplomatic efforts to curb additional development and proliferation of current technologies by its erstwhile friends in South America, leaders would do well to remember that no independent country has yet foresworn such capability once it was developed. We have traditionally looked East and West (with the understandable exception of Cuba) to monitor the nuclear horizon; strategists must now consider the potential threat from the South

as well;

(b) Forward presence of US forces in areas where the US has vital interests. Significantly, those forces must be oriented no longer solely on the geographic regions in which they are stationed. Instead, those units must be prepared for rapid deployment outside their assigned theater to support concentration and massing of overwhelming combat power thousands of miles from "home" base. While there are presently no North American forces deployed permanently on South American soil, this should not be construed necessarily as an acceptable condition once US forces are removed from the Isthmus of Panama. As we approach the 21st Century, evidence abounds that our interests in South America are both numerous and vital in several cases; we would perhaps be wise to look south--as opposed to north and the Continental United States-for CINCSOUTH's new home.

(c) Crisis response. The US military will maintain balanced, robust, and joint military forces in the Continental United States which are capable of responding quickly-and with convincing capability-to regional military threats similar to those posed by Iraqi forces in Southwest Asia. Once deployed, it is expected that our forces will fight alongside allies in the region in support of alliance or coalition objectives. (In South America, as we shall see, it's a long way from Bogata to Tierra del Fuego, so that challenges to US power

projection in the region are not as dissimilar as one might initially think); and

(d) Reconstitution of manpower, equipment, and industrial reserves to reinforce early-deploying forces, or to respond to a second regional military threat elsewhere in the world. Because of the lengthy time-delays which planners must assume as the US industrial base shrinks inevitably in the post-Cold War environment, and because of our own limited reserves of manpower, initiatives which would permit us to draw upon additional South American military resources in the event of prolonged conflict should be pursued vigorously.

(2) Regional Components. Adaptation of US military strategy to South America leads to development of courses of action which:

(a) Promote nuclear deterrence by curbing the development and prospective export of ballistic and/or nuclear technology by Argentina and Brazil to Third World nations. In exchange, the US must be prepared to offer South America high-priority "umbrella coverage" from ongoing Strategic Defense Initiatives (e.g., GPALS and/PATRIOT air defense systems), and to provide economic offsets for lucrative foreign-sales opportunities which have been voluntarily passed over;

(b) Commensurate with further drawdown (beyond current base-force levels) of US forces presently deployed in Europe and/or Korea, encourage rotational stationing in SA of small (no larger than an Army battalion task-force or MEB-equivalent) ground/air forces to assist with intelligence collection, security assistance, and drug interdiction efforts. Furthermore, theater strategists should vigorously promote army-to-army training initiatives-designed to improve coalition performance (more about that later) in the event of regional conflict, or to assist with environmental/disaster relief operations;

(c) In coordination with the OAS (or its more legitimate and authoritative successor), and in cooperation with signatories of the Rio Treaty, conduct combined planning for, and periodic exercise of, capability to respond to regional threats of aggression. This should not be misconstrued as an argument for displaced "Battles for the Fulda Gap", but recognized as an absolutely essential component of regional military team-building and interoperability of command and control, operational planning, and communications architecture. US military leaders will continue to lament the lack of "professionalism" within SA defense organizations unless-and until-we help in the design and execution of combined military exercises which stretch current operational capabilities. While it is important that we (the US)

not be seen as either the lead or dominant participant in such exercises, our advice and logistical support should be readily available to other members of the planning coalition. Moreover, the joint/combined exercises need not be constrained to AirLand Battle applications, as the US retains a significant interest in guaranteeing the free passage of naval vessels through traditional sea lanes of commerce-particularly the Caribbean Basin, the Atlantic, and Cape Horn/Straits of Magellan; and

(d) Seek economies in the weapons development/ defense acquisition process that facilitate industrial "surge" during extended regional conflict(s) or general war. The US military establishment must expand its efforts to share research and development costs with its allies in South America, identify sources of "strategic" resources that require accelerated acquisition (to compensate for scarcity and/or long-lead times of development), and provide appropriate "offsets" (in terms of co-production or limited technology transfer) to them in exchange for their participation in joint weapons purchases. Where comparative advantage clearly exists in buying "South American", the US should be willing to make the appropriate concessions--so long as the US defense industry enjoys the same reciprocity.

II. Theater Strategic Situation. Prospects for regional stability in South America appeared to be improving steadily until

the upheaval of recent weeks, first in Venezuela and now in Peru. The upswing among several SA economies has been accompanied by gradually improved relations with the US--particularly in the wake of Operation JUST CAUSE--and modest success in curbing the flow of illegal drugs into the United States. As the strategic importance of the Panama Canal diminishes, and as the threat to the Caribbean Basin subsides concurrently with Cuba's loss of stature and newfound stability in El Salvador and Nicaragua, the United States is in need of a much-revised hemispheric policy.

The illegal production and transport of drugs from South America remain the most immediate threat to US national security, as well as principal threats to regional stability. As traffickers seek new havens in remote areas of the Amazon, and as they develop alternative smuggling routes to evade detection, vastly increased intra-regional cooperation between (and among) national police and military forces is required. However, stability is also threatened by the existence of several factors--political, economic, and social/environmental--which are related only tangentially to the drug trade. The roots of popularlyelected democracy remain shallow in several SA countries, and are equally susceptible to damage by their respective militaries as they are by the drug traffickers and remaining leftist insurgent groups. Mistrust of the OAS (borne of the

historical imbalance of interests between SA member-nations and the United States) and each other continues to complicate coalition-building in response to regional problems. Also, several countries (like Brazil and Argentina) continue to hold the US responsible for their having failed to achieve their rightful geopolitical statuses in the world order.

Economically, inflation and competitive suspicion remain worrisome as countries in the region press for market-economy reforms. Brazil is afflicted with an industrial base in which it invested heavily during the 1970s, but which today lacks the advantages accorded by automation and computer technology. That abundantly resourced country has enjoyed only haphazard success in its efforts to diversify and develop the sensitive Amazon Region, and residual foreign debt as a consequence of heavy borrowing at unfavorable interest rates continues to cast a pall over economic development. As political barriers continue to fall, the growth of regional trade is complicated by the prospective loss of "comparative advantage" among a country's producers vis-a-vis those of another country offering similar products. There is also the problem of head-to-head competition with the US, such as Argentina experienced in its efforts to sell wheat to Brazil.

Finally, crop substitution for the financially lucrative cocoa plant is meeting but with meagre success, and the drug trade remains rampant in the new safe-havens in the Amazon.

Environmentally, the deforestation and exploitation of the Amazon, widespread industrial pollution, and chronic overcrowding of major urban areas pose long range threats to both regional and US national security. The much-publicized "ozone hole" extending over southern Chile and Argentina merits continued scientific study, and may require stringent and time-sensitive remedy upon completion of that study. Socially, overpopulation in the cities has been accompanied by polarization of ethnic and work groups, caused no doubt by the extremely slow "trickle-down" of newfound economic wealth to the disenfranchised. At the opposite extreme, such as in the homogeneously populated Argentina, chronically low birth rates and veiled ethnocentrism discourage foreign investment and diminish opportunities for real growth.

III. STRATEGIC CONCEPT. A multi-dimensional strategy for dealing with the regional threats summarized above can hardly be centered on the prospective use of military force. Indeed, it is probable that direct US military involvement in South America will remain

limited, although the prospect exists for the piecemeal commitment of additional resources (and equipment) to the drug war. Rather, a comprehensive strategy should include:

a. Increased high-level and multilateral political and diplomatic contacts with South American leaders, such as we have traditionally pursued with the leaders of Europe and Japan. Such contacts must emphasize equality in our relationships, stress US support for the civilian-led democratic governments of the region, and underscore the increasing geopolitical importance of the nations of South America in the emerging multipolar world order. Secretary of Defense Cheney's recent visit to Brazil, Argentina, and Chile appears to have been received very positively by his hosts, and the CINC recently completed his own swing through the Southern Cone. For years, however, South American leaders have been sensitive to the fact that the US commonly dispatches the Vice President to wave the American flag in Latin America. President Bush's personal attendance at the upcoming Environmental Conference in Rio should offer the opportunity for additional "whistle stops" in South America prior to his return to the US-and clearly signal the increased importance with which the US views its vital interests in the region;

b. Reinvigoration of the Organization of American States as a bona fide North-South alliance (as opposed to an expedient US-dominated coalition) to deter external aggression and to focus efforts for continued regional stability. The OAS (in coordination with the World Bank and International Monetary Fund) should be charged with taking the lead in assisting with debt-restructuring initiatives of several member-nations, as well as in securing the benefits of the North American Free Trade Agreement for remaining OAS members. Rather than appearing to react--often belatedly) to the political direction of Washington, the OAS should be encouraged to develop its own proactive and long range strategy (commensurate, of course, with expressed US vital interests) for converging the forces at work in South America. Using the US Southern Command to provide the command and control apparatus and intelligence/logistical infrastructure, leaders should explore the possibility of constituting a standing, multinational military force to provide better means of enforcing OAS policy decisions. OAS handling of the current political crisis in Peru could prove a harbinger of its expanded role in the region.;

If, as its numerous critics have suggested, the OAS lacks the regional support to grow to its broader mission, then perhaps the time is opportune for establishing a new organization which

would be focused exclusively on the regional problems of South America. The encouraging trade initiatives underway among Brazil, Argentina, and Chile could be seized upon as the first step towards a continental open-market, managed centrally beneath the auspices of a South American "Union". The principal difference between its Western European prototype would lie in its warm receptiveness towards US participation (not leadership!), flexibility in permitting member nations to retain the vestiges of nationalism while accruing the benefits of regional economic and political cooperation/coordination, and the formal sanctioning of a combined military arm with which to "leverage" its policies and decisions. My personal opinion is that the US has much to offer such a fledgling organization, given its own experience with market-economy reform, political pluralism, and regional military alliances--and that our participation would be welcomed if our intentions are judged as helpful, and not avaricious or self-serving. Obvious choices for the organization's location are Brazil and Argentina; however, the dispersed European Community model (Brussels and Strassbourg) might be more appropriate, especially considering residual tensions between several of the member countries.

c. Increased-but controlled-foreign military sales to South American countries, together with expanded joint research and

development (R&D) and co-production of major equipment end-items. Not surprisingly, equipment needs of each country differ from those of its neighbors. Brazil, confronted as it is with extremely long borders and vast tracts of inaccessible terrain in Amazonia, requires augmentation with state-of-the-art radar equipment, helicopters, and airlift with which to monitor and interdict its expanding drug problem. Contrastingly, Argentina and Chile have presented their respective cases for F-16 fighter aircraft, which are needed to modernize their aging inventories of F-4s, F-5s, and Mirages (and, if one buys into the Argentinian argument, to assist with aerial interdiction of the narco-traffickers). The US is rightly moving with extreme caution in reviewing FMS actions in SA, so as to discern more corectly the implications for regional balances-of-power, and to preclude possible confrontation with our other allies with regional interests (i.e., Great Britain). As CINCSOUTH correctly pointed out during his recent visit to the Air War College, FMS comprises neither a coordinated strategy nor an acceptable military objective in support of such a strategy. Still, the US must work constructively, and within the framework of a coherent regional military strategy, to ensure modernization of allied forces commensurate with the role we expect them to play in the region. Most probably, some calculated risks will need to be taken.

Joint R&D and acquisition ventures would represent a bold step forward in our relations with South America. Heretofore, we (the US) have supported such arrangements only when we needed financial support from abroad (from the Shah of Iran and, more recently, Japan) or when we sought to ward off regional competition (as was the case with the development/production of F-16s in Europe and Turkey) and protect the US defense industry. Promoting such cooperative initiatives with our South American neighbors will no doubt attract the vehement opposition of US protectionists whose vision is understandably more focused on short-range objectives--like jobs for US workers. An effective counter might be to point out the increased opportunities for regional investment and the prospective growth of defense-related consultation/maintenance-support industries in those countries where we opt for co-production. Emphasis would remain on producing weaponry which supports the joint and combined regional military strategy--so that we separate regional "wants" from verifiable "needs." Additionally, such cooperation should facilitate continued US access to critical raw materials and strategically important minerals;

d. Limited economic aid and assurance of fair tariffs and competition in international markets. The US simply lacks the financial resources to dole out the staggering quantities of

foreign aid needed to resolve the current financial predicaments of several SA countries. Equity swaps have been employed effectively by Chile and Argentina to help restructure foreign debts, and, as mentioned previously, the US should continue to work (bilaterally initially, but also through the OAS or South American Union) towards similar debt-reduction initiatives in SA. As those countries in the region continue to stabilize their currencies and contain inflation, they will become increasingly competitive with the US under open-market conditions. Generous US subsidies of its agricultural products will no doubt be viewed as protectionist, and we can ill afford regional perception that we are "dumping" US products to secure unfair advantage. By the same token, however, the US has an obligation to its own citizens to ensure the same fairness of economic competition in SA. Although many US investors remain understandably wary of extensive holdings in South America because of residual political instability, they must be made to appreciate that timing is critical. Our Japanese and Western European competitors are moving aggressively, and have established an economic presence in SA (witness Japanese investment in Chile). US government officials may need to consider generous tax-credits to stimulate regional investment;

e. Design of joint military training ventures which test US capability for crisis response to threats in the South Atlantic

(and/or Pacific). The CINC responded sharply during his visit to suggestions that his command was preoccupied with the drug war to the exclusion of other military exercises. Still, it is unlikely that his firm charter to curb the flow of drugs from Latin America has permitted him the requisite "breathing room" to construct joint and combined training scenarios that far exceed the bounds of Low Intensity Conflict (LIC). Moreover, with few exceptions, the civilian and military leaderships of regional countries probably have not given the matter a great deal of thought. Funds are scarce, and political sensitivity is high. (The greatest skeptics at the moment reside within our own embassy walls.) Nonetheless, there is simply no better way to foster *enhanced military professionalism* among the countries of SA than through meaningful and challenging training exercises. General Joulwan's ambitious (and thus far successful) operational campaign plan against the drug traffickers is an extremely important--and necessary--first step. I submit they are not sufficient as we look ahead towards the strategic imperatives of the 21st century in South America. Admittedly, there is a problem, inasmuch as regional military planners need a commonly agreed-upon "Threat". Initially, a healthy stimulus to planning might be the construct of an out-of-sector response to a broader international coalition's call to arms; and

f. Continued pressure on Brazil and Argentina to discourage the military development and export of nuclear/missile technology. In so doing, the US must be careful not to lump those countries back into the "have not" countries of the region and the Third World. Despite recent instability in Venezuela and Peru, indications abound that several SA countries are prepared to shed their "also-ran" cloaks. It would prove an irreversible mistake to place Brazil and Argentina (as well as others) into such categories. Rather, it would be wise to design industrial applications for their emerging technology, and to further refine their capabilities through the joint development/production initiatives discussed above. If, as the Brazilians claim, their technological development is oriented on applications in space, they may be agreeable to cooperative launches in coordination with NASA and our own Space Command--such as they are apparently pursuing with the Russians. Finally, the US is likely to be pressed at some point to scale down its objections, so long as other world actors continue to export nuclear and ballistic-missile technology to the Middle East and Third World. The bottom line is that money talks; our regional allies are well aware that other nefarious suppliers stand ready and willing to make the sale. A possible compromise would be to accord Brazil

and Argentina top priority (Chilean sensitivities assuaged) in conventional-weapons upgrade with military stocks deemed surplus in the aftermath of the US force drawdown.

IV. Proposed Course of Action. There is no "right" solution for the CINC; alternatives are several, and he must weigh and act upon them within the political and military direction he has been given from Washington. In the short term (2-5 years), I think his wisest course to be:

a. Continuation of his aggressive anti-drug campaign, employing his three-tiered approach to attack the growth, processing, and transport of cocaine as he simultaneously begins to target the organizational infrastructure of the drug trade;

b. Coordination of effort among the countries of the region, relying upon assistance from the US Country Teams and drawing upon US intelligence/surveillance sources, to synchronize strikes against the narco-traffickers and achieve synergy (as well as to deny safe havens);

c. Consistent with his current restrictions against actively employing US forces in the drug war, continue to provide support personnel, military advisors and Special Force instructors (in the hope and expectation that US aid and assistance will be reapplied promptly in the drug-interdiction efforts);

d. Ensure that regional leaders understand US insistence that foreign military sales be linked to cooperative theater strategy, so that they re-examine both their needs and their previous requests to Washington (and hopefully understand that regional priorities must ultimately determine their place in the equipment-distribution queue);

e. Exploring the feasibility of combined training exercises involving US and regional forces--perhaps one per year in the Andean Ridge, and a second in the Southern Cone (or South Atlantic). Conceivable scenarios include counterterrorist operations, airborne/airmobile and riverine raids to accomplish "VIP" snatches, assaults in urban terrain, and coordinated attacks to dislodge insurgent forces from a regional stronghold. Although involvement of US forces ought not to exceed Army battalion-level, regional forces could conceivably include up to divisional/air-wing contingents. Ideally, those exercises would be sanctioned by, and coordinated under the auspices of, the OAS, with CINCSOUTH's planning staff and command and control apparatus providing the military "umbrella" for the exercises. Quite possibly, US light forces could be employed in the aggressor role, or as <u>controllers</u> to assist in the evaluation/ feedback process.

It would be fair to observe that the CINC's military strategy does little to protect the environment, stimulate free-market trade, reduce debt, or eliminate widespread poverty and growing crime in South America. Clearly, he needs extensive help from the State Department (together with Congress and DOD) in coordinating his military strategy with ongoing initiatives which support the broader dimensions of US national strategy with respect to South America. What his military approach <u>does offer</u>, however, is an important first step towards a radically altered US theater-military strategy as this country recognizes the imperatives of change in South America and adapts for the future. In that regard, I would offer the following as a theater military strategy for 1995 and beyond:

a. OAS (or SAU)-sponsored, US-supported, combined-force operations to secure eradication of the drug trade in South America (implicit in this approach is that USSOUTHCOM will be part of any regional military arm) ;

b. Upgrade of military forces and equipment in the region consistent with their support of OAS policies and willingness to participate in joint/combined regional military exercises. At this point in time, planners ought to focus on large-scale (division-on-division or corps-against-corps) maneuvers to test more fully the capabilities of US/OAS crisis-response forces. It is too soon to identify the hostile force(s), but certainly a

Cuban-invasion prototype would be both workable and realistic. Yet another option would be to deploy a combined OAS force out of sector in support of a TEAM SPIRIT/REFORGER-type exercise...or better yet, to conduct an "offset" of those exercises on South American-terrain every second or third year.

c. Aggressive individual training/officer professional development programs and frequent student "exchanges" to further improve the military professionalism of South American leaders. A senior-service college equivalent of the School of the Americas ought to be founded, with joint-service accreditation being awarded to those US officers selected for attendance. Moreover, the CINC's staff and deputies will need to represent the multi-national composition of the regional military force. (And, the day will come that the CINC himself may be wearing an other-than-US uniform.) Just another NATO prototype, some may argue, but I submit that there are more than a few similarities between conditions in post-WWII Europe and those which exist today in many parts of South America.

d. Periodic regional planning conferences to address coalition military strategy, review operational plans (and each country's earmarked forces to support those plans), and coordinate the resources required to accomplish theater military objectives. By no means should the US show up at those conferences expecting to shoulder the lion's share of the bill.

Our partners in the region demand treatment as equals; thus, they should expect to pay their proportional shares.

e. A coordinated development/acquisition program which builds upon the industrial capabilities and capacities of regional nations, which allows the transfer of appropriate technology from US sources, and which ultimately produces modernized equipment that is both appropriate and affordable for the missions to be accomplished.

f. Regional-power involvement/participation in space exploration and surveillance programs. Conceivably, satellite downlinks could be established at major OAS-subordinate command headquarters.

Implicit in the above discussion is the tacit understanding that regional instability in South America will have largely subsided prior to the turn of the century--if not by 1995--and that US gestures of good-faith will be embraced by our neighbors to the South. Mutual trust is an absolute prerequisite, and there will need to be some "give" on all sides if we are indeed to embark on an ambitious NATO/EEC political/military and economic program for South America. My personal belief is that the time has come, that the US has both the opportunity and the obligation to move beyond its "sombrero-land" approach to South American policy-making, and that the long-term consequences of our moving

too slowly could prove devastating. For the CINC, these ought to be exciting times.